

**Talbot County Economic Development Commission**  
**215 Bay Street, Suite 5**  
**Easton, MD**  
**February 6, 2014 Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:** Chairman, Ted Bautz; Vice Chairman, Geoff Oxnam; Ann Borders, Walter Chase, Gordon Frank (Representing Peter Dunbar), John General, Susie Hayward, Haim Loran, Paul Makosky, Gerry O'Mara, and Len Wendowski

**Ex Officio Members Present:** Shannon Dill, Mike Henry, Erik Neil, Ph.D., and Tom Ryder (Representing Terenda Thomas)

**Members Excused:** Peter Dunbar

**Attendees:** Timothy Jones, Laura Heikes and Alex Handy

**Guest Speakers:** John General and Alex Handy, Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST). President of the Handy Group presented outcomes of a study recently completed on ridership and visibility of the MUST. Mr. Handy used a focus group for their survey to see what people knew about the bus system. MUST has the potential to enhance the area's economic development and quality of life by providing transportation to residents and is available to everyone, not only seniors and those with disabilities. The survey consisted of 784 interviews at ten different medical providers in the five-county area. The survey demonstrated very few people knew about the MUST or how it operated. The recommendations included an aggressive ad campaign including all the services provided. There is a huge gap of transportation for the workforce. Mr. Handy ran the video of the MUST TV spot, raising awareness and use of the system; however, they are having difficulty distributing because they do not have the budget to purchase airtime. The EDC discussed how they could assist with promoting the video. The MUST budget is \$61,000 per year, which pays for general operations. Mr. Chase offered to insert a news release about MUST in Trappe residents' water bills. Mr. Henry offered to promote MUST on the Easton Airport website. The Director mentioned the CTAC regional planning meeting is on March 12<sup>th</sup> and to pose the question regarding the costs for advertising ridership and to expand the routes.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by Chairman Ted Bautz, in Conference Room 3, located at 215 Bay Street, Suite 5, Easton, MD 21601. A quorum was present.

**Agenda and Minutes:** The Agenda for the February 6<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting was approved without changes. The Minutes from the January 2<sup>nd</sup> Commission meeting was approved, pending administrative corrections.

**Correspondence:** The Director reported correspondence was sent to John Ford, President, Easton Town Council supporting the development of Waterside Village. The project will come before Easton Town Council on February 18<sup>th</sup> and was requested by Len Wendowski. The Director reported a letter of support was sent to the Eastern Shore Delegation in support of the Department of Business & Economic Development (DBED), proposed legislation to expand the Maryland Economic Development Assistance Fund. The Economic Development Commission and the Office

of Economic Development wrote a letter to support the funding. House Bill 468 – Maryland Economic Development Assistance Fund was heard on February 5<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 pm.

**Old Business:** The Director reported on the question concerning if an EDC Ex Officio member was eligible to serve as Chairman. Talbot County Attorney, Mike Pullen, responded that Ex Officio members may serve in elected capacities. Mr. Oxnam accepted the seat as Vice Chairman, nominated in his absence, and the Commission thanked him for his willingness to serve. The Director announced that the Defense and Government Contractors' Reception would be held tonight, February 6<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm at Sotera Defense Solutions. The defense and government contractors generated \$30 million in revenue in FY 12 with 57 contracts. This reception will be an opportunity for the Defense and Government Contractors to network, foster resource cooperation and to ascertain if they have any needs that we may address in order to retain them, as well as attract new contractors. 28 people are planning to attend.

**New Business:** The Director reported that the State has provided a training session on how to conduct open meetings in compliance with the law. The training is available online through the following link: [http://www.igsr.umd.edu/VLC/OMA/class\\_oma\\_intro1.php](http://www.igsr.umd.edu/VLC/OMA/class_oma_intro1.php). Additional information about the Open Meetings Act is available on the Attorney General's website: <http://www.oag.state.md.us/Opengov/Openmeetings/>. The training is highly recommended to the EDC, as a board, on behalf of government business, to be familiar with the very specific rules of conduct.

EDC meetings have been restructured to provide more time for committee work: Business Environment Chaired by Mr. Bautz; Marketing Chaired by Mr. Loran; and, the Workforce Committee, which we are just beginning to develop. The two Committees have been populated with commission members, and representation from the public. The Marketing Committee will meet on the second Tuesday of the month; the Business Environment Committee will meet on the fourth Tuesday of the month. Both meetings will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the offices located on Bay Street. EDC members have been asked to participate: Mr. Makosky, Ms Hayward and Mr. Oxnam have joined Business Environment; Dr. Neil and Mr. Henry have joined Marketing. The work accomplished may be reported quarterly to the County Council.

Business Environment Committee: Mr. Bautz reported members have been drafted and an agenda has been outlined that includes exploring the data, the available sites and the policy and regulations in the permitting and business development process. Sandy Coyman, Talbot County Planning Officer; and Don Richardson, Town of Easton Code Official; have been invited to participate, as key to the planning, inspections and permits process.

Marketing Committee: Mr. Loran reported the committee has been organized. He met with the remaining County Council members to understand their views on development. Mr. Loran and the Director reviewed a branding proposal from one vendor who provided an excellent example of how a small Alaska town captured and expressed the spirit in a branding campaign. The business is to create marketing platform and sell the county to prospective businesses. A database that lists which companies intending to move their location would be useful for review to draft letters to the companies we do want to invite to visit Talbot County. An invitation was extended by the EDC to meet with members of the Easton Economic Development Corporation, to apprise them of our work

and to receive input concerning Easton and Talbot County as a community. The meeting had to be canceled due to weather. The Director reported she met with several organizations who are concerned with workforce development and a Committee on Workforce might look at the coordination of these resources to ensure people are getting into jobs where they can earn a family wage.

The Director reported that she has invited key business resource partners (SBA, TEDCO, DLLR, SBA, MCE, etc.) to meet on the last Monday of the month with businesses in the towns of Trappe, St. Michaels and Easton to offer services. The Director is establishing contacts with St. Michaels Business Association, regarding a location for the meetings and with the reorganized Easton Business Alliance. Ms. Borders offered to follow up on this matter concerning St. Michaels. Oxford expressed interest in being included in this service and we agreed to contact the Oxford Business Association.

**Chairman's Report:** Mr. Bautz advised that he also serves on the Easton Economic Development Corporation's (EEDC) Board and last Monday they provided a summary of their activity to the Town Council with a description of their goals and vision. Mr. Bautz reported they received a good reception from the Council and good press coverage. Part of the focus is on two key objectives: to attract a University to Easton and to establish A Food Hub for distribution of locally grown foods. The EEDC has had conversations with a couple of universities, who have expressed very strong interest in coming to Easton/Talbot County. The organic and health food production, aquaculture, and the farm-to-table movement is an opportunity to use the strength of available land and agriculture. There is a mega trend towards healthy local food and we are in a huge market area where part of that mechanism is the production and distribution of food. Talbot County and Easton have the opportunity to provide the infrastructure to enable these opportunities. Another area for focus is promoting investment in Easton itself by creating a small business development fund. Foremost is working very closely with Talbot County Economic Development Commission. It was suggested that we invite Herb Miller, Chair of the EEDC, to a future commission meeting.

**Director's Report:** The Director provided a monthly report of activity. The Annual Economic Report is in draft and will be completed with a submission of the budget to the County Council. The EDO has requested a substantial increase for a marketing effort to accommodate branding, interactive web/media and collateral materials. The EDO is also requesting consideration for two contractual part-time positions: a business retention specialist and website-marketing specialists. The Director reported that the County is in the process with their Comprehensive Plan and the chapter on Economic Development and Tourism is available for review. Copies will be distributed to the EDC members and placed on March's agenda. Martin Sokolich, Talbot County Long Range Planner, is available to visit the EDC at the March meeting to answer any questions.

The Talbot County Business Appreciation Breakfast is scheduled to be held Thursday, April 24<sup>th</sup> at the Milestone. To prepare for the awards, the EDO will prepare a list of nominations who have demonstrated outstanding Innovation, Investment or Expansion to impact our local economy. Additionally, each of the towns are invited to submit recommendations to recognize a business or organization for their impact on their town.

**Member Activity Reports: Gordon Graves (representing Peter Dunbar, Town of Oxford):** reported that the Town of Oxford made the paper this morning regarding their storm water plan. The reaction of the town was favorable to accept a fee to create a utility to deal with storm water. A plan, created from one of the architects out of the University of Maryland, provides for an aqueduct. The town met with the State Highway Administration and is exploring options for funding. **Geoff Oxnam, Easton Utilities:** reported that they upgraded internet speeds for service and have created “New Business Packages” for small businesses. Easton’s current starter service is sold at what the competitors’ present top-level service offers. Easton Utilities is working with a number of businesses on special applications and high-end fiber work. Easton Utilities has recently developed an outage map, that the county has deployed, which shows real-time data for tracking hazards and emergencies countywide. Both dispatchers and the public can utilize the program. The Junior Achievement Mentoring Program will be teaching almost 900 students this year, compared with three years ago, when they had 176 students. They work with private and public schools and, through the generous support of the community, raise funds for the cost of materials. A Dodge Ball Tournament on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, at the Easton High School, is scheduled to raise money for Junior Achievement. Junior Achievement is working to create the experiential learning facility at Achievement Park as a unique facility that will provide Junior Achievement Programming and expand the students’ experiences through a broad range of after-school educational programs to keep the students engaged, excited, and learn what “achievement” actually means. **Ann Borders, St Michaels:** reported the settlement on Perry Cabin was postponed due to water damage but the facility is under contract to new owners. The Big Al’s and adjoining properties have been purchased for a residential cluster of 13 houses. The significant change to Talbot Street would convert commercial use to residential. **Erik Neil, Ph.D., Academy Arts Museum:** reported the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum has hired a search firm for the Director’s position, recognizing this position has a tremendous positive impact on the community. The Talbot County Historical Society has hired a new Director and is redirecting their resources. High school artists from a three county area are showing their work at the Academy of the Arts; yesterday they had the elementary and middle school students showing their artwork and over 700 people came through their doors. This Academy encourages creativity and arts education in the community and this event represents the broadest range of event participation, which is heartwarming and exciting. Plans are forming for the “June Teenth” celebration featuring artist Bryan Collier, an illustrator of children’s books from Pocomoke City who won the Coretta Scott King Award. The Academy of the Arts is on the verge of opening their new digital studio, transitioning an out of date dark room to an engaging lab environment for people to explore art expression with digital technology, graphic design and video. Lastly, Dr. Neil encouraged all to see the Chul Hyun Ahn Exhibition, which has been extended to February 23<sup>rd</sup>. **Haim Loran, Marketing Chair:** No additional report. **Gerry O’Mara, Agriculture:** expressed that attracting a university in Easton/Talbot County is a great idea and remembers when IBM relocated their headquarters, they chose a university town. Mr. O’Mara also commented on the Grow Local/Buy Local initiative as proposed with a Food Hub and remarked that sophisticated marketing systems, coordinating supply and demand will be required. Mr. O’Mara noted that Cassandra Vanhooser, Talbot County Tourism Director, is doing a great job for Tourism as evidence by her recent presentation to the Local Farm Bureau. Tomorrow, at Chesapeake College, there is an Agriculture Marketing Conference hosted by Shannon Dill, Talbot County Ag Extension Agent, one of many wonderful programs that support our Ag Community.

**Shannon Dill, University of Maryland Extension:** reported that the Federal Farm Bill was finally signed. Shannon receives the Farm Bureau Hot Line, which provides a synopsis of the bills going to Annapolis, and Farm Bureau support. Tomorrow they have the Chicken Tax hearing, which is proposed by a group out of Baltimore City, who are requesting that the poultry industry pay 5 cents tax on each chicken sold. The 62nd Talbot County Corn Club was held in January and reported the highest average yield in 2013 ever with 209 bushels to the acre, and the winner had 246 bushels to the acre. **Tom Ryder (representing Terenda Thomas, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations (DLLR):** reported that the Easton Job Center is now fully staffed with two Business Resource Representatives working directly in the county to which they are assigned, as well as a supervisor. If you notice a help wanted sign in your town, please call DLLR, 822-3030, and we will send our staff to explore the vacancy. The Maryland Workforce Exchange [www.mwejobs.com](http://www.mwejobs.com) is an on line system that can also support employers and job applicants in their search. Last month 625 people come in the Easton office looking for service, last time this year the numbers were 847 people. DLLR has had a good response working with the Talbot County Library to disseminate information and support programs. **Len Wendowski, Town of Easton:** reported the Council has scheduled a Public Hearing for Harris Teeters, an upscale grocery store, on Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, which will offer about 150 jobs. Mr. Wendowski thanked the Commission members for their letter of support for this project. The trees on Mistletoe Hall property, owned by the town of Easton, continue to be an obstacle and safety issue to planes landing at the airport and the town is now suggesting they will review the next step in the process in March. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Town of Easton received an excellent presentation by the Easton Economic Development Corporation. The Town also reviewed the structure for Impact Fees, with proposed amendments, which will be voted on at the next meeting <http://www.town-eastonmd.com>. The town needs many upgrades and they took out a loan to repair some of the major streets; Aurora Street will be on the next agenda. The State has given the town a grant to reimburse them for part of the work done on Marlboro Road and the Parkway. The town has not heard any more news, from or about, the hospital. **John General, Small Business:** No additional report. **Walter Chase, Town of Trappe:** The Town of Trappe has several waste water pumps that need to be replaced because some of them are over 30 years old and two of them will cost \$26,000 to replace. They have had several applicants for a new Town Clerk's position and they chose a candidate at their meeting last night. The EDO met with Trappe businesses on February 22<sup>nd</sup> and discussed marketing events and the opportunity to have the Town provide signage on Route 50 to notify motorists that Trappe has a downtown. Commissioner Chase took the matter to the Trappe Commission Meeting on February 5<sup>th</sup> and it was voted unanimously with funding. Mr. Chase reported that on January 20<sup>th</sup> at the Easton Middle School, he received the Martin Luther King, Jr. Award. **Tim Jones, Chesapeake College:** reported that Chesapeake College is in full session. The Montgomery Community College, in Pennsylvania, has developed an agreement with Drexel University where 75% of college students from the community college are enrolling into Drexel and they offer them a 30% reduction off Drexel's tuition. It is a model that offers great potential. The Allied Health Professional Building is in the construction phase. The college received approval last Tuesday to proceed and the contracts are going out. The college sent a list of Tier-One contractors and contact information in order to get local businesses involved. Transportation is a major issue for Chesapeake College and they are working to address this issue, specifically the carbon footprint. The college is looking to be environmentally friendly and 80% of the admissions for the college are

commuters. The college has had some trend down in enrollment and there is a big campaign to get the enrollment numbers back up. The College is hosting a Murder Mystery Dinner Theater on March 1<sup>st</sup> and tickets are \$45.00 per person. **Laura Heikes, Trappe Talbot Bank and from the public:** reported that Talbot Bank utilizes the Easton Utilities county-wide sight program as a management tool. Ms. Heikes reported that The Talbot Bank places an ad in the paper annually, informing the public of what the bank does to support the community; this year the employees gave close to 7,000 hours. **Mike Henry, Easton Airport:** thanked the ED Commission for their continued support to encourage federal funding of Control Tower, approved until the end of September. This indicates eventually it will be structured for permanent funding. The Airport appreciated the opportunity to speak with Easton Town Council concerning the impact fees for airport hangers and recommended a change in the structure of the fees. The issue for the airport is the base for the charge on private hangers, which allocates 4.96 employees per 1,000 square feet. There is inequity on the impact, and the request was to reconsider a new category for aircraft hangers, as they seldom have more than 4 employees for 10 times that space configuration. The airport received a second call from a government contractor looking for office space for eight workers and passed the information on to the EDO. **Susie Hayward, Real Estate:** reported that, needless to say, this is a slow time for the real estate market. Following is the estimated figures for January 2014:

	<b>Sold</b>	<b>Listed</b>
<b>Talbot</b>	34	506
<b>Easton</b>	19	239
<b>St Michaels</b>	4	67
<b>Oxford</b>	1	39
<b>Trappe</b>	4	31
<b>Tilghman</b>	2	39

The number of units in various stages of foreclosures is about 65. The end-of-year statistics show more properties were sold in 2013; however, the average prices were less. The true reflection of what is selling in the county is masked by houses that are not priced properly on the market. There are buyers out there, but they are not desperate to buy and they are not going to over pay. A commercial report is excluded from the residential real estate report. **Paul Makosky, Member at Large:** observed that the County and the activities since 1986 have dramatically changed and the vitality and attitudes of the EDC in the last several years are improved. Mr. Makosky mentions the activity at the Avalon, Chesapeake Chamber Music, Academy Art Museum, the Hospice, the Airport, the Towns and the ED Commission itself, and the engagement of the people involved, the patrons, and the broadening outlook, he notices several magnitudes improved. Mr. Makosky mentioned his perspective not for everyone to rest on their laurels, but to realize what is happening and to work to continue this trend. Mr. Makosky indicated this is a consequence of the quality of leadership, the quality of the membership in the Commission and the contributions made to date are amazing.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 a.m.

**Meetings are held at 8:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month. The meetings are open to the public. The next Economic Development Commission Meeting will be held on April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 215 Bay Street, Suite 5, Conference Room #1, Easton, MD.**

Maryland Upper Shore Transit (MUST Bus) [www.mustbus.org](http://www.mustbus.org)

Revised Impact Fee Study

A public meeting was held in the Council Chambers on January 21st, 2014 to discuss revisions to the Impact Fee Study. Please click here for a copy of the revised document.

<http://www.town-eastonmd.com/TempMedia/Impact%20Fee%20Study%2021Jan14.pdf>

Aday Remus: Jason Broadwater's Development Tool: (<https://adayremus.com>)

To view the Proposal to Amend Nutrient Management Regulations, along with the Extension Bulletin to be incorporated by reference in the Maryland Nutrient Management Manual:

<http://mda.maryland.gov/Pages/Proposed-Regulations.aspx>.

A fact sheet "AgBrief: Phosphorous Management Tool - An Overview of the Proposed Regulations" is also available online at:

[http://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/ag\\_brief/AgBrief\\_PMT\\_092013.pdf](http://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/ag_brief/AgBrief_PMT_092013.pdf)

The Maryland Workforce Exchange and labor market information are available online at

<https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.